

Innovation Ecosystem Development Initiative

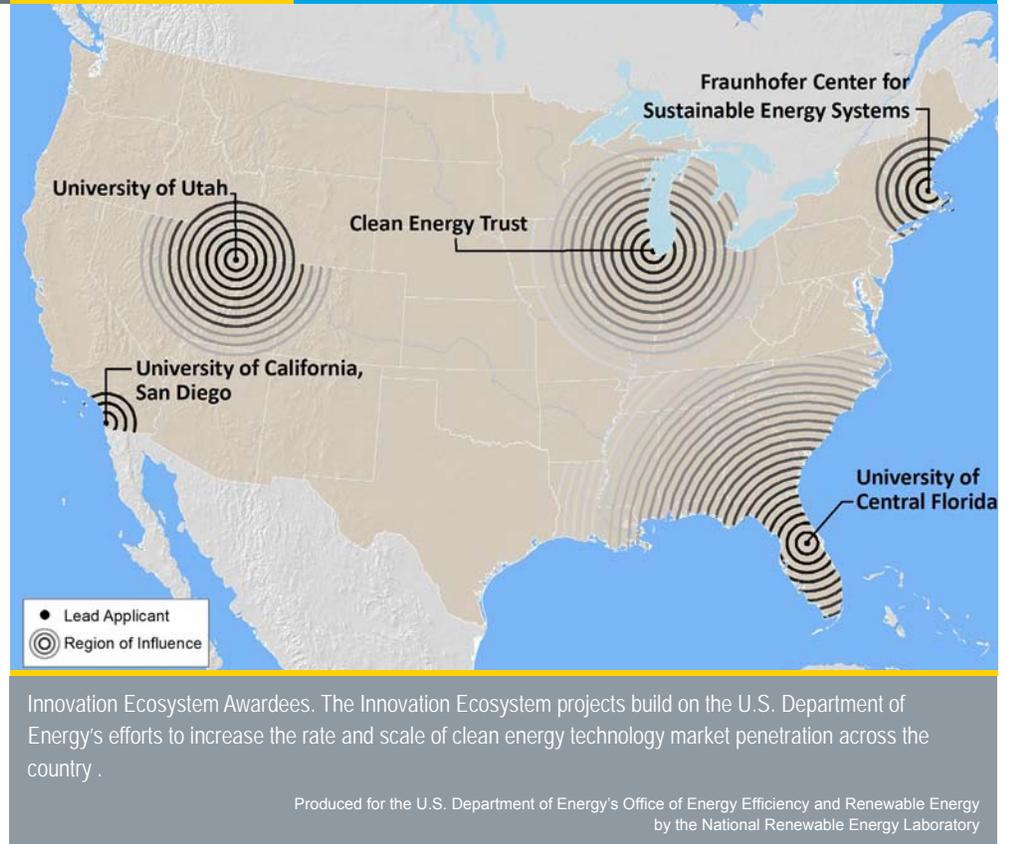
Transforming ideas from research concepts on the drawing board to innovations in the marketplace is essential for a competitive and prosperous U.S. economy. To accelerate high-growth entrepreneurship and job-creation by moving energy efficient and renewable energy technologies from university laboratories to the market, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) awarded \$5.25 million to five three-year projects under the Innovation Ecosystem Initiative.

The Innovation Ecosystems are nonprofit- or university-led clean energy business incubators in distinct geographic regions across the United States. By uniting the strengths of American research institutions and universities with expertise in the finance, government, economic development communities, these projects nurture and mentor clean energy entrepreneurs in areas including protecting intellectual property, engaging businesses and venture capitalists; and promoting innovation and commercialization across university schools and departments.

The award recipients are:

Clean Energy Trust (Chicago, Illinois)

The Clean Energy Trust (CET) is a clean energy accelerator whose mission is to further the growth of the clean energy economy in the Midwest. To achieve this goal, CET conducts a number of initiatives designed to source, evaluate, and launch new clean



energy businesses derived from university research. As part of its initiatives, CET holds an annual Clean Energy Challenge business plan competition in which students and independent entrepreneurs compete for seed funding and business support services. CET has also developed the Clean Energy Exchange to leverage its relationships in the Midwest in support of educating the broader community and promoting the advancement of clean energy technologies. The Inventory Project is an interactive database that compiles regional information on the clean technology economy into a searchable, consumable format for the public.

Fraunhofer Center for Sustainable Energy Systems (Cambridge, Massachusetts)

Fraunhofer TechBridge, part of the Fraunhofer USA Center for Sustainable Energy Systems, supports early-stage cleantech companies transitioning from the lab to the market. TechBridge administers U-Launch Awards to provide early-stage cleantech with funded research and development services, experienced entrepreneurs, and incubator services. These services are provided through a collaboration with the New England Clean Energy Council, the Association of Cleantech Incubators of New England, and the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center. These awards help new clean technology ventures avoid typical startup pitfalls, beat the odds, and grow into mature companies. Recent awards were announced in collaboration with the Northeast Regional Cleantech Open. Fraunhofer has also announced a collaboration with the Clean Technology Sustainable Industries Organization to fund demonstration projects in the 3rd annual Utility Technology Challenge.



"Many great clean energy technologies have been born in our nation's research universities. Accelerating linkages between university research, investors and the business world is essential to moving these great ideas to the marketplace," said Secretary of Energy, Steven Chu. "The innovative clean energy start-up companies supported by these ecosystems will advance American competitiveness and will help create the jobs of the future."

Courtesy of the San Diego Renewable Energy Fellowship

University of California, San Diego (San Diego, California)

The University of California, San Diego and San Diego State University are partnering to enable a more fertile environment for clean energy innovation, and to expand the number of clean energy start-ups or technology licenses in the greater Southern California region. The partners are building on the proven model of the William J. von Liebig Center's Technology Acceleration Program, and hold an annual Regional Energy Innovation Challenge. Selected teams and their technologies are paired with MBA student mentors and von Liebig business advisors. Each year, three top teams are awarded year-long fellowships for technology validation and commercialization.

University of Central Florida (Orlando, Florida)

The University of Central Florida (UCF) connects promising research in energy efficiency with experienced entrepreneurs and resources that can expedite commercial production and create high-wage, high-value jobs. UCF conducts an annual clean energy business plan competition called Megawatt

Ventures open to all Florida universities in the first year, and expanding to include Southeastern universities in years two and three of the project. To foster connections and partnerships, Megawatt Ventures has been generating an extensive database of local and regional energy-related organizations, including company executives, start-up companies, students, and faculty who conduct energy-related research.

University of Utah (Salt Lake City, Utah)

The University of Utah has created the Energy Commercialization Center (ECC) to assist participating Western universities and research institutions in transferring university-developed clean energy technologies to industry and start-up companies. The Center provides resources such as mentoring, proof-of-concept validation, prototype guidance, and access to services at the University of Utah's Technology Commercialization Office. The ECC is engaging with regional universities, external companies, the Cleantech Open, and as many other stakeholders as possible to create a dynamic center that commercializes the best and most cost-effective clean energy technologies, fills gaps in the clean energy industry, and finds, funds, and fosters the big ideas that address today's most urgent energy challenges.

For More Information

For more information about the Innovation Ecosystem Initiative, please visit eere.energy.gov/commercialization/innovation_ecosystem.html.

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